NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5800 MAY 9, 1978
MARK HOPKINS/HAMBURG

BREZHNEV GERMAN TRIP

ANNCR:

VOA CORRESPONDENT MARK HOPKINS HAS A BACKGROUND REPORT ON THE FOUR-DAY SOVIET-WEST GERMAN SUMMIT TALKS BETWEEN PRESIDENT BREZHNEV AND CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT, THAT ENDED SUNDAY (MAY 7) IN HAMBURG:

VOICE:

WHILE THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF OFFICIAL PRAISE FOR THIS SUMMIT, WEST GERMAN COMMENTATORS ARE SAYING THAT NOT MUCH WAS REALLY ACCOMPLISHED, EXCEPT FOR A VAGUE WARMING OF RELATIONS BETWEEN WEST GERMANY AND THE SOVIET UNION. THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN THE STATUS OF BERLIN, A PRIME INTEREST HERE. WEST GERMAN REPORTERS KEPT AFTER THE SOVIET SPOKESMAN, LEONID ZAMYATIN, SO INTENSELY ON THIS SUBJECT THAT FINALLY AN IRRITATED MISTER ZAMYATIN SNAPPED THAT HE WOULD ANSWER NO MORE QUESTIONS AT ALL ON BERLIN.

PRESIDENT BREZHNEV AND CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT TALKED PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY ABOUT ARMS LIMITATIONS, AND MISTER BREZHNEV, IN A PRERECORDED TELEVISION BROADCAST TO THE WEST GERMAN PUBLIC, WENT SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT THE EAST-WEST ARMS RACE IS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR WHAT HE SAID IS A SLOWDOWN IN DETENTE. BUT THREE WERE NO NEW PROPOSALS DURING THE BREZHNEV - SCHMIDT SUMMIT TO NUDGE ALONG THE STALLED VIENNA TALKS ON TROOP REDUCTIONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE.

NOR WAS THERE ANY CHANGE ON THE CONTROVERSIAL NEUTRON WARHEAD. MISTER BREZHNEV, AS EXPECTED, BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT AND OBJECTED TO THE WEAPON. CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT IS SAID TO HAVE RESTATED BONN'S VIEW, WHICH IS THAT THE SOVIET UNION'S TANK ADVANTAGE IN CENTRAL

EUROPE HAS SOURRED DISCUSSION OF THE NEUTRON WARHEAD. WEST GERMANY, THEREFORE, WOULD ACCEPT DEPLOYMENT OF NEUTRON WEAPONS, IF NATO ALLIES AGREE.

PRESS REPORTS SAY PRESIDENT BREZHNEV CAME TO WEST GERMANY FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, THE VISIT HAD BEEN OFFICIALLY PLANNED FOR TWO YEARS. NOT TO HAVE COME HERE WOULD HAVE BEEN DIPLOMATICALLY HARMFUL TO DETENTE. AND SECONDLY, PRESIDENT BREZHNEV SOUGHT RENEWAL OF A DIALOGUE ON DETENTE THAT HAS RUN INTO TROUBLE BOTH IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN WESTERN EUROPE.

HIS TRIP HERE REVEALED AN AGING SOVIET LEADER. THE SEVENTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD BREZHNEV, AS WEST GERMAN REPORTS HAVE NOTED IN DETAIL, FOLLOWED A SHARPLY CURTAILED WORK SCHEDULE. THE TELEVISION CAMERAS SHOWED A MAN WHO MOVES SLOWLY, WHO APPEARS CONFUSED AT TIMES, WHOSE FACE IS PUFFY, WHOSE EYES OFTEN SEEMED TO BE UNFOCUSED. IN PRIVATE, PRESIDENT BREZHNEV IS SAID TO REVEAL AN ALERT MIND, FULLY BRIEFED ON THE ISSUES. BUT THE PUBLIC IMPRESSION HERE DRAWN FROM THOSE PUBLIC APPEARANCES VIA TELEVISION IS FAR FROM THAT.

JS/RCS